

Message Text

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PEPR, MASS, SW, IN, US
SUBJECT: VIGGEN SALE TO INDIA

1. IN CONVERSATION WITH POL OFF, MFA SOURCE TASKED WITH DRAFTING TALKING POINTS FOR MINISTER LINDER'S AUGUST 2 MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY PROVIDED SOME INSIGHT INTO PAST AND PROJECTED GOS ARGUMENTATION STRATEGY ON VIGGEN CASE. SOURCE BELIEVES GOS MISCALCULATED IN UNDERESTIMATING US READINESS TO REACH DECISION SOLELY ON GROUNDS OF ARMS TRANSFER PRINCIPLES. GOS HERETOFORE STATED ITS CASE TO US ESSENTIALLY IN STRATEGIC TERMS, BELIEVING WASHINGTON'S INTEREST IN PRESERVING STRONG SWEDISH DEFENSE, WITH CONSEQUENT BENEFITS TO NORDIC AND NATO DEFENSES, WOULD BE DETERMINING FACTOR IN THE END.

2. SWEDES ARE NOW PREPARING TO CHANGE GEARS AND MEET ARGUMENTS OF ARMS TRANSFER PRINCIPLES HEAD-ON IN COURSE OF LINDER-VANCE MEETING. LINDER WILL LIKELY ACKNOWLEDGE AGREEMENT WITH AND RESPECT FOR CARTER ADMINISTRATION ARMS TRANSFER POLICIES. INDEED, SWEDES ARGUE, THEIR OWN ARMS SALES ARE MORE VIGOROUSLY CONTROLLED THAN ARE THOSE OF US. RATHER THAN SEEKING AN EXCEPTION TO US PRINCIPLES WHICH THEY SHARE, SWEDES ARGUE THAT THESE PRINCIPLES DO NOT APPLY GIVEN FACTS OF THE VIGGEN CASE.

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3. SWEDISH ARGUMENT IS BASED ON FOLLOWING FACTORS:
(A) GIVEN INVENTORY OF FIGHTER AIRCRAFT WORLDWIDE, VIGGEN IS NOT CONSIDERED A DPSA.
(B) GRANTED US REFUSED SALE OF A-7 TO PAKISTAN, FACT REMAINS THAT A-7 IS A MUCH MORE SOPHISTICATED AIRCRAFT THAN VIGGEN.
(C) PAKISTAN ALREADY HAS SOME 70 MIRAGE III AIRCRAFT.

VIGGEN IS IN SAME LEAGUE AS MIRAGE AND CONSEQUENTLY
DOES NOT REPRESENT INTRODUCTION OF NEW WEAPONS SYSTEM IN AREA.

(D) VIGGEN WOULD REPLACE OBSOLETE HAWKER HUNTERS IN INDIAN
AIR FORCE BALANCING OUT PAKISTANI MIRAGES. INDIA,
AS WORLD'S LARGEST DEMOCRACY, SHOULD BE ENTITLED TO A MODERN
AIR FORCE.

(E) NON-PAPER WHICH ASSTSEC BENSON HANDED TO SWEDISH
CHARGE INDICATES US WOULD NOT SELL A-4 IN SUBCONTINENT.
THIS WAS CASE PRIOR TO DECISION NOT TO SELL A-7, BUT PAKISTANIS
HAVE SINCE BEEN GIVEN LEAVE TO
PURCHASE A-4, SWEDES BELIEVE.

(F) TECHNOLOGY INHERENT IN US ENGINE IS WELL-
KNOWN TO INDIANS, SINCE AIR INDIA PLANES ARE EQUIPPED WITH SAME
PRATT AND WHITNEY ENGINE AS VIGGEN. AIR INDIA IN FACT MAINTAINS
FULL SERVICING FACILITIES FOR THIS ENGINE. GOS IS READY TO SUB-
STITUTE NON-US PARTS FOR ALL US-MADE COMPONENTS ON VIGGEN OTHER
THAN ENGINE.

4. COMMENT: AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, LINDER'S RECENT
TRIP TO DELHI PUT RENEWED VIGOR INTO SWEDEN'S ATTEMPT
TO SECURE US APPROVAL FOR VIGGEN SALE. LINDER WAS
TOLD THAT THE INDIAN SUB-CABINET COMMITTEE STUDYING
THE THREE ALTERNATIVE AIRCRAFT RATED VIGGEN NUMBER ONE
IN TECHNICAL TERMS. HE WAS TOLD ALSO THAT DEFENSE
MINISTRY PERSONNEL PREFERRED THE VIGGEN. AND HE
HEARD FROM NO LESS A PERSONAGE THAN PRIME MINISTER
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DESAI THAT VIGGEN WAS A STRONG COMPETITOR IF US APPROVAL
WERE FORTHCOMING.

5. THE GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ASSURED OF OPPOSITION SOCIAL
DEMOCRAT INTEREST AND SUPPORT AS LINDER PREPARES FOR
HIS SESSION WITH SECRETARY VANCE. ALTHOUGH VIGGEN
CASE HAS BEEN KEPT OUT OF PRESS, THERE IS NO QUESTION
THAT POLICY MAKING LEVELS OF SWEDISH GOVERNMENT AND
ESPECIALLY SENIOR DEFENSE AND FOREIGN POLICY OFFICIALS
ARE DEEPLY INTERESTED IN ISSUE AND WILL BE INTENSIVELY
FOLLOWING LINDER VISIT TO WASHINGTON.
KENNEDY-MINOTT

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